

25 May 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Childs

SUBJECT: Comments on Proposed Interagency Operating Procedure
Biographic Register

1. From my knowledge and observation the work on biographical data maintenance on foreign scientific and technological personalities has worked satisfactorily in the agencies and in CIA since the issuance of the simplest of the NSCIDs -- namely, NSCID/8. If there is a specific question from one agency on this subject, let's answer that rather than stirring up procedural trouble by writing what may well be considered by agencies generally as an unnecessary procedure.

2. The nub of the problem confronting us is in part 2 of the proposal. It has always been accepted as reasonable and efficient that one place in Government would index all names of all biographic types. That place is CIA.

3. With this basic justification for a centralized index, and supporting dossiers in the case of scientific and technological personalities, I have never been able to understand with clarity what is meant by CIA maintaining "extracts of information relating to foreign individuals who figure significantly in national intelligence and upon whom adequate data is not available in other agencies." Who are such people that have the potentiality of figuring "significantly in national intelligence?" What is the difference between figuring in national intelligence and figuring in departmental intelligence? The only plausible answer is that this approach opens wide the door for liberal interpretation. Couriers of a few years ago are now at politico level in the Communist regime.

4. This factor of figuring "significantly in national intelligence" is to be limited to those "upon whom adequate data is not available in other agencies." For two reasons this is an unsound stand for us to support.

a. First: In our basic act, and as reiterated orally and in writing, we must depend upon the agencies for collection of information, be that biographic data or otherwise. Thus we must recognize that State is responsible for collection and maintenance of biographical information in the political field. If that is inadequate State should be compelled to eradicate such inadequacies. We should not assume the obligation or function

to fill State's weaknesses. It is our duty by positive statement of requirements and by a directive, if such proves necessary, to correct the State situation.

b. Second: If through some covert means we get biographic or other type data of prime concern to one of the departments or agencies let us get that to the department concerned with efficient speed rather than build up a separate supplemental file in CIA.

5. We must be realistic enough to realize that under any set of procedures biographic abstracts are and will always be maintained informally by researchers in the production offices. However, what we are against is formally supporting extraneous supplemental files which are spuriously justified on that basis that the persons they cover may figure "significantly in national intelligence and upon whom adequate data is not available."

6. Thus I recommend:

a. That we ascertain more concretely what is meant by the innocuous phrase "persons who may figure significantly in national intelligence." Without such clarification empire builders could build a world.

b. That we learn concretely about the inadequacies of the agencies in this field. Is it lack of basic data? Is it delay in furnishing the information when required? Is it a lack of co-operation to give? When these questions are answered fully then we are in a position to suggest remedial procedures to cure the problem.

c. That we be guided in all such discussions or deliberations by the fact that "coordination" does not mean assumption of duties inadequately done by departments or agencies. More accurately does "coordination" mean the responsibility to see that bad things are done good and good things done better by those who are responsible to do them.

7. Conclusion:

a. I am convinced that by following these recommendations we will get to the core of this problem which has been seething for a long time, and the result should be greater efficiency in the biographical data field and a cut down on some activities now being done wrongly by CIA.

b. The only complete and practicable solution to this entire problem is that all biographical data on all types of personalities be maintained centrally in CIA as a service of

common concern to all intelligence agencies. If this existed, the internecine strife of today would vanish very quickly and we would not be experiencing the existence of a basic file in State and "supplemental" files in CIA on the same individuals.

c. This view possesses genuine realism when we consider the fact that no one agency can logically maintain a complete biographical file on any one man and still remain within its specific agency responsibilities. Many men are high in Commerce today and tomorrow are appointed to high positions in the armed services to be followed by a sojourn in the scientific field. A central control eliminates completely the problem of who covers the man when he is in Commerce; when he is in the armed services, and when he is in the scientific field.

d. Furthermore, I am convinced that with the establishment of such a focal system much money could be saved by the discontinuance of activities now being performed in the agencies.

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